

A N
E S S A Y
O N T H E
History of Parties,
A N D
P E R S E C U T I O N
I N
B R I T A I N;

Beginning,

With a brief Account of the *Test-Act*, and an Historical Enquiry into the Reasons, the Original, and the Consequences of the *Occasional Conformity* of *Dissenters*.

With some Remarks on the several Attempts already made, and now making for an *Occasional Bill*.

Enquiring how far the same may be esteem'd a Preservation to the *Church*, or an Injury to the *Dissenters*.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. Baker at the Black-Boy in
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Illustrations of the PERSECUTION

BY
B. R. T. N. W.

With a brief account of the Test,
and an inquiry into the
Reasons, the Consequences,
and the Controversy of



With some Remarks on the several Attempts
already made, and now making for an
Occasional Bill.

Enquiring how far the same may be effectual
a Preservation to the Civil, or an Injury
to the Dissenters.

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A N

E S S A Y, &c.

IN order to enquire Critically into the Reason and Justice, as well as Consequences, of an *Occasional Bill*, or an Act to prevent the Occasional Conformity of *Dissenters*, it seems necessary to state as distinctly, and in a Method as unexceptionable as may be, the *Nature* and *Original* of the Thing call'd *Occasional Conformity*, and by what Steps the present Debates about it, have come upon the Stage.

That this may be done with as little Offence as possible, we shall deduce things in a brief Historical Narration from undoubted Testimony of Fact, recent to the Memory of most observing Men in this Age, and not to be contradicted by the false Glosses or Misrepresentations of any: And if by this it should appear, that the following are undoubted Truths of unquestion'd Au-

thority, then all the Vehemence which some have used, in presenting the several Acts against *Occasional Conformity*, will appear so many Attempts, *Whether knowingly or ignorantly, is not to the Purpose*, against the Constitution, and against the just Right of their Country ; *That is to say,*

1. If it appears, That the Act of Parliament called *The Test-Act*, has been inverted by the Sinister Designs of a Party among us, and being in its true Intent and Meaning formed against *Popish* Recusants only, has been turned against our Fellow Protestants, to the weakning and injuring the Interest of the Protestant Religion in general in this Kingdom ;

2. If it appears, That it is a Law unjust in its own Nature, and inconsistent with the Native Rights of the Subjects of *England*, as well as with the Sovereignty of Conscience, which ought not to be imposed upon ;

3. If it appears inconsistent with the Christian Religion, and with the Principles and Doctrine of the Church of *England* ;

4. If the manner in which it is put in Practice appears to be a Plot against the Peace of the Nation, and a constant Handle

dle to the Strife of Parties, and Oppression of the Innocent.

If upon an Impartial Enquiry into the History of this Law, these things should appear, then it may be worth our Consideration, whether we should still pursue a thing so fatal to the General Good, and be for ever Sacrificing one another to the Resentment of Parties, robbing each other of the Peace, Liberty, and Birthright of *English-men*, under the Forms, but contrary to the true Intent and Meaning of the Law.

From this short Introduction, and in order to lay these Things more plainly before us, That *English* Protestants may see what they are doing, and may not sacrifice one another to the Interests of the Enemies of both; We proceed to ransack from the Beginning, the Records of these Things, that the Truth being brought forth into a clear Light, and viewed with open unblinded Eyes, the present Generation may have none to blame but themselves, if they pull down the Liberties and Religion of their Ancestors with their own Hands.

After the Restoration of King *Charles II.* had been for some Years perfected, and the Court as well as the Kingdom was gotten
over

over their first Transports, enjoy'd a full Dominion over the *Puritan-Party*, as they call'd them, and had for two or three Years suppress'd the Remains of them by severe Prosecutions of *Dissenters*, suppressing *Conventicles*, Fining, Imprisoning, and Confiscating the Hearers, and Banishing, as by the Corporation-Act, their Ministers or Preachers Five Miles from every considerable Town, and the like ; the Nobility and Gentry of *England* began to see, that while their Eyes had been taken up with pursuing these lesser Evils of *Schism* in Religion among Protestants, they had, as the Consequence of such Proceedings generally proves, insensibly suffered the secret Encroachments of *Rome* and of *France*, and opened a Door to *Popery* and *Tyranny*.

It would be too tedious a thing to undertake here, what all our Histories are full of, *viz.* To give an Account by what insensible Degrees the King (influenc'd by the Council of his Brother a declared *Papist*, and by his own Resolutions, himself as appear'd at his Death, being secretly a *Papist*, an Account whereof shall in these Tracts be at large made Publick) suffer'd himself and all his Councils to be acted and managed by the Artifice of *France*, and being himself a Pensioner to the King of *France*, brought his whole Kingdom to be passively subser-

subservient, and actively assistant to the Rising Exorbitance of that Prince, whose Power so assisted, has since grown too great for all *Europe*, and has cost this same Nation, whose Blood and Valour assisted them, to rise so much Blood and Treasure since to reduce.

At length, tho' late, the People of *England* took the Alarm, when in the Year 1672, the King of *France* made that dreadful Eruption into *Holland*, attacking the *Dutch* with three formidable Armies at once, without any Provocation, any Satisfaction demanded, or Cause assign'd, save that he was ill satisfied in them.

At the first of this War we wretchedly assisted *France*, not only by Land, but declared War against the *Dutch*, and fell upon them by Sea, in a manner too dishonourable for an *Englishman* to say much of, viz. falling upon their *Smyrna* Fleet, while in full Peace they might be supposed to come securely into our Channel, if not into our very Harbours. The rest we choose to cover with a Hand of Charity, rather than expose the Nakedness of those Times, more than the Necessity of the present Argument obliges us to.

The Successes of *France* against the *Dutch* reduc'd the States to the Brink of Ruine, and *Naerden* being taken by the Duke of *Luxemb.*

Luxemburgh, it was expected, that *Amsterdam*, which was but 12 Miles off, would have sent Deputies to make their Submission to *France*. But in this Interim the Massacre of the *de Witts*, and the Ruine of the *Barnavelt* Faction intervening, the Prince of *Orange*, afterwards King *William* of Glorious Memory, a Prince born for the Rescuing oppress'd Nations, and for a Refuge to the Protestant Religion, was restor'd to the Administration of the Affairs in *Holland*, revived the Courage of the desponding People, and in a little time drove the *French* as fast out of the Country, as they came in.

These things, and the Progress of the *French* in *Flanders*, alarm'd *England*, as we hinted above, and put us upon Enquiring into our State at Home; Endeavours were us'd to bring *England* over, and the Pulse of the People in Parliament beat so high against *France*, that the Court was oblig'd to make a shew of Changing Sides; Peace was made with the *Dutch*, an Offer of Marriage of the Princess *Mary*, afterwards Queen *Mary*, to the Prince of *Orange*, and several measures taken, which look'd like a War with *France*, tho' nothing less intended.

An Army was rais'd, Three Millions seven hundred thousand Pounds given by Parliament for the Carrying it on; but such hold had the *Popish* and *French* Councils gotten

gotten in the *English* Court, that all the Means which were possible to be used could never get the King to Declare War, but at last ended all in the Treaty of *Nimeguen*, a Peace wholly to the Advantage of *France*.

During these Transactions, the Patriots of the Protestant Interest in this Nation, finding the Influence which *French* and *Popish* Emissaries had on the King, and finding the *Popish* Lords in the House always vigorous to oppose every thing which was for the advancing the new Measures, they apply'd themselves to several Methods, in order to weaken the *Popish* Party. They could not yet obtain an Act to prevent the *Popish* Lords Sitting in the House, but the present Case was to prevent *Popish* Officers in the Army; who were so many, and behaved so Insolently, that the Army then raised and incamp'd at *Black-Heath*, under a Pretence of the War with *France*, was become a Terror to the People, and was called the **Cut-throat Army**.

The Earl of *Shaftsbury*, who till then had been one of the Five Capital Letters, which formed the Word *CABAL*, was the Man who contriv'd and brought in the Proposal for a Bill to dispossess these *Popish* Officers: And the Title of the Act expressed the Meaning and Design of its being

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brought in. The King, the Court, and all the *Popish* and *French* Interest, opposed it with all their Might; but the Popular Terror, and the just Fear the People were in of a *Popish* Army, prevailed, and it pass'd by a great Majority; neither did the King think fit to oppose himself to the Stream of the whole Nation at that time, especially there being a great Money Bill then depending in the House, for no less than 1238750*l.* which would have been lost. So the Bill pass'd, 25 Carol. 2. and is Intituled, *An Act for preventing Dangers which may arise from Popish Recusants.*

This is the Famous *Test-Act*; and that the true Intent and Meaning of this Act, and the Reason of its making, may more plainly appear, the Preamble to the Act is thus; *For preventing Dangers which may happen from Popish Recusants, and for quieting the Minds of His Majesties good Subjects; The Uneasiness of His Majesties good Subjects,* was at that time manifest to be their Fears of the Army and Court being put into the Hands of *Papists*; and the People who push'd on the Act, were those very People, who espousing Liberty and Property, obtain'd in Contempt from the Court-Party the Name of *Whiggs*.

But

But further to explain this Matter, the Court, which with all possible Management and Art opposed this Law, endeavour'd to alarm the *Dissenters* with their Danger from this Act; and Alderman *LOVE*, Representative for the City of *London*, a Man of unspotted Integrity, was privately spoken to, that he might oppose it on behalf of the *Dissenters*: This at first had some Effect on the People; but Mr. *Love* seeing into the Design avoided it, and would not meddle; on the other hand, the Persons who brought in the Bill, assured the *Dissenters*, there was no Design to offer them any Disturbance, and that if they desired it, they would bring in another Bill afterwards, to exempt them from the Penalties of the said Act, representing to them at the same time, That if they struck in to oppose this Act, the Bill against *Popery* would be lost, and both they and the Church of *England* should fall together, under the growing Mischiefs arising from the Power of *Papists* in the Court.

The *Dissenters*, prevailed upon with these Arguments, and especially depending upon the Promises of the *Church-men*, (Unhappy Credulity!) that the Act had no View towards them, and should in no wise be turned upon them, acquiesc'd, and to save the Church of *England*, sacrific'd themselves

and their Posterity, to the Ingratitude of those that proposed it to them. Just thus the *Dissenters* in *Ireland* suffered themselves to be prevailed upon in the same Case, rather than to lose that happy Bill last past there to prevent the Growth of *Popery*; into the middle of which, a certain Noble Person then in the *Ministry*, and lately become a Convert to a *Principle* perfectly new to what he formerly profest, thrust into the middle of that Act, thereby to throw out all the Faithful Subjects of the Government, who spent their Estates, and some of their Blood in the Defence of *London-Derry*, against the *Popish* Army of King *James*, from being trusted with the Magistracy of the City they defended.

In this manner, and on this Occasion, and no other, this Act was passed, which is now become so much the Favourite of a Party, as to be thought the great Defence of the Church of *England*; how and by what Degrees it became so, may not be improper to enquire.

It was some Years after the first passing of this Act, 'ere the Effects of it on the *Dissenters* were much taken notice of; and during the first 10 Years afterwards, the Capitulation of those Persons who brought it in was pretty well observed: And tho' several Persecutions happen'd in that time upon

upon the *Dissenters*, by Virtue of other Penal Laws which were turned against them, yet this Part of the Law was not much insisted on till about the Year 82, and 83, when the *Popish* Plot being turn'd into Ridicule, and several Plots trumped up upon the *Dissenters*, partly to turn the Odium of that Plot upon them, and partly to suppress them as a Party joyning with the *Whigs*, especially when the Court undertook the modelling of Corporations, and brought Writs of *Quo-Warranto* against the Charters of Towns: Then this Law was turned full-but upon the *Dissenters*, and with all imaginable Eagerness insisted upon, even so much as to the Common-Council Men of the City of *London*; nay, they began to talk, or offer at, allowing no Citizens to Vote for Common-Council Men or Aldermen, but such as had taken the Sacrament; and to run it to all possible Extremities, they went this Length, That no Man should be allow'd a License to keep an *Ale-House*, unless he had taken the Sacrament of the Church; and several sad Stories are left upon Record, of Persons falling into Despair, Melancholy and Madness, for having acted against their Consciences in that Case; till at last it was said, a poor profligate Wretch found out an Expedient for it, and finding a Priest with as little Religion as himself,

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communicated with him, professing to take it as no Religious Act, for that he owned he was not fit to do it; acknowledging himself a Scandalous Sinner, but that being forced to do it, or lose his License, which was his Livelyhood, he took it as common Bread and Wine, &c. There are other Scandalous Instances of the Severity of those Times, which we omit, being not willing to aggravate the Grief of those things.

By the publick Management of these Times, this Act was thus brought on the Stage, as if made on purpose for the *Dissenters*, while at the same time the *Papists*, against whom it had really been made, were upon every Occasion forbore, conniv'd at, and overlook'd; and all Attempts to prosecute the Law against them discourag'd and discountenanc'd.

This continued during the whole Reign of King *Charles II.* and in King *James's* Reign, till the Defeat of the Duke of *Monmouth*, when the King in his Speech to the Parliament, fairly told the House, He could not want the Service of the Gentlemen of his own Religion, and openly Dispensing with this Law in the *Papists*, cajol'd the *Dissenters* with their share of the Liberty.

Some

Some of the *Dissenters*, it must be allowed, were so far partial to their own Ease, as not to consider that it was given them at the Expence of the Constitution, and that their enjoying the Relaxation of Penal Statutes by the Breath of the King, was a stopping their Mouths against the open Breaches of the Law, and effectually taking from them any Argument they might use against the Dispensing Power, or the pulling down all the Fortifications of our Laws against *Popery*, and Arbitrary Government.

But their Eyes were soon open'd, and they saw the Mistake time enough to joyn heartily with the Church of England, in restoring the Liberties of their Country, and overthrowing the projected Establishment of *Popery*; and then followed the **Revolution**.

During the whole Reign of King William, the *Test-Act* slept in its Native Circumstance, its first Design in keeping *Papists* out of Publick Employment, out of Parliament, Army, and Civil List, was effectually answer'd: But the corrupt turning the Edge upon the *Dissenters* was discountenanc'd, as what was not only not the Interest of the Nation, but as what was not the true Reason or Intent and Meaning of the Bill. The King, who had a native Aver-

Aversion to all Religious Coercion, had also the less Inclination to push the Severity of this Law upon the *Dissenters*, because he knew in the Original Making that Law, it was not in the View either of the People, or of the Sovereign, to give them the least Disturbance on that Account.

Yet here the *Dissenters* committed another Error; for as if they were easier in their Compliance, in that they were not at all compell'd, they voluntarily comply'd with the Law, tho' they were sure no Man would meet with Encouragement in prosecuting them for the Omission; nor do we find in all this time any Prosecution commenced against any Protestant Dissenter, for taking or executing any Office or Place, whether Civil or Military, without taking the Sacrament.

This obtain'd the Name of **Occasional Conformity**; but the Freedom with which the *Dissenters* qualified themselves, at their entring into such Offices, tho' there seem'd no Danger in the Omission, gave Offence; first to their own Friends, especially among those, who having a more strict regard to their Principles, look'd upon it as an Inconsistency with their professed Dissent from the Church, who complained openly, that such who could on meer Occasion of Preferment, and to shun a Penalty Conform, ought

ought not to be receiv'd again into the Communion of particular Congregations, but as Penitents.

There were many who took up the Weapons against this Objection, and thought to master it with Arguments drawn from General Charity: But however they might prove the Legality of a Communion of Charity with all Orthodox Christians; or a General Communion with the whole Christian Church; yet it is most certain, no full Answer could be given to that Part of **Occasional Conformity** which was submitted to by Persons otherwise Dissenting from the Church, meerly to qualify for Preferment and Places in the Government, which was the Sum of the Dispute at that time.

This Argument therefore being directly against them, became exceeding Popular, and especially it appear'd a little new to find the *Dissenters* themselves vigorously Disputing for *Conformity* to that very **Church** which they statedly separated from.

No sooner was Her present Majesty come to the Crown, but the Enemies of the *Toleration*, having as they thought, an opportunity to oppress the *Dissenters*, began here; They found nothing so proper to render them hated and odious to the People, as the Charge of Hypocrisy, and therefore immediately

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took hold of this, as an Advantage which offered against the *Dissenters*, and that would make their Proceeding against them popular and specious: And this introduced the first **Occasional Bill**.

Now as all Extrems in the unhappy Divisions of this Nation, have been fatal to the common Liberty of the whole, as well as to the Parties themselves, who run unadvisedly into them: So here, as the *Occasional Confor-* of those *Dissenters* in general, who run to the Sacrament in that prophane manner, meerly for a Qualification, grew scandalous and hateful, even to their own Brethren, whose Consciences were more strictly obey'd; so the absolute restraining the Liberty of Occasional Conforming, in all that should enjoy any Publick Employment, tying them up from ever Communicating, or so much as hearing a Sermon in a *Dissenting Meeting*, or indeed in any Foreign Protestant Church, on Pain of losing their Employments and Livelyhood; this always carry'd with it such an Air of Cruelty, such an Invasion of Native-Right, such an Oppression of Conscience, such a visible Inconsistency with the **Toleration**, and such a Degree of *Persecution*, that all the moderate Part, even of the Church of *England* it self, opposed it.

How

How it was first introduced and pass'd the *House of Commons* ; how it was sent up to the *Lords* for their Concurrence ; how the *Lords* return'd it but with one Amendment, relating to some Circumstances not essential to the Bill, and which the *Commons* would gladly have quitted in their subsequent Attempts ; and yet how the *Commons* adhering to their first Bill, and the *Lords* insisting on their Amendment, that Bill was lost : How the next Session, a second Bill was brought in, and sent up to the *Lords*, but the Temper of Persecution having lost Ground, was thrown out by the Peers by a great Majority : And *lastly*, how a third Bill was brought into the *House of Commons*, and lost in their own House by the Attempt to Tack it to another Bill ; and how that Tacking Project not only threw out the Bill, but even overthrew the Party, that had been all along so forward to promote it : These are Things so well known to every Man that has any Concern upon him for the Publick, and the Particulars have been made so public, that we need do no more, than refer the inquiring Readers to the Papers which have been already published on that Occasion.

When after this by the late **Court-Revolution** in *England*, a new Turn was given to all our Civil Affairs, and new Faces appear'd in the Management; as the Warmth of the *High Church* Party appear'd in several Extravagancies so unbounded, as we had Reason to apprehend, that they could be deny'd nothing, and knew they would stick at nothing to raise their New Party and effectually crush the Old, so it was expected this old Affair should be revived.

When we say *expected*, 'tis needful to add that it was expected by every Party: The *High Party* expected it; they said one to another, That now was the happy Moment, when it was in their Power entirely, not to establish the Church only, but so effectually to crush the Interest of the *Dissenters*, as to render it impossible for them ever to rise again, at least so as to make themselves formidable to the Church.

We might add here what that Party promised themselves from the Restoration of their Friends, the Elections having gone generally in their favour; how they reduc'd the **Toleration** to such a Pitch, that they would no more have it allow'd to be a **Toleration**, but an Exemption from the Penalty of certain Laws; how the Academies
and

and Schools of the *Dissenters* were threaten-
ed, and Prosecutions against some of them
actually begun; and how in all Places, they
began to threaten the *Dissenters* with shut-
ting up their Meeting-Houses, and in many
Places, rabbl'd, pull'd down, and burnt
their Meeting-Houses; but this may be re-
ferr'd to a more proper Place; this may, we
hope, sufficiently prove, That the Friends
of that Party made no question, but that an
Occasional Bill should be immediately
brought in.

The *Dissenters* testify'd early their just
Apprehensions, when in the Hurry of this
Change at Court, and the coming in of a
New Party like a Flood; the Insults in
their Persons, the Injuries in their Houses
and Meetings, the Abusive Railing Pam-
phlets, and the Tumultuous carrying of all
kinds of Elections, against common Rules
of Modesty and Decency, as well as Right,
made it Rational to them to think, that no-
thing could be so severe, but what they had
Reason to expect; and therefore that an
Occasional Bill should be Introduc'd in-
to the next Parliament, to the Ruin of their
Liberty, was one of the least Things which
they thought it was Reasonable to fear.

Even those Gentlemen, who tho' willing
for other Reasons, to join in the Changes
at Court, were yet of more Moderate Prin-
ciples

ciples, that were willing to have the late Ministry depos'd, and admitted the New Ministry, as a Means to such other Ends as they had in View, whether respecting this or that View, yet unconcern'd with any Religious Prospects ; These, tho' they did not approve of the Occasional Bill, as what they imagin'd needless to the Church, and tending to encrease the Uneasinesses of the People, which they having settled the New Management of Civil Affairs, desir'd to bring to some settled Condition ; yet it is plain, expected the Occasional Bill to be push'd at the last Session, and as they expected it, so they apply'd themselves to prevent it, and, as by the Consequence appear'd, did prevent it.

It will be needless to bring the Complaints of the Hot Men against these last ; for their fatal Moderation, as they call it, is an Evidence, that these Men of Moderation did effectually stop the Current of that Zeal, or Heat, call it what you please, which would have put forward such a Bill : 'Tis enough, that the House of Commons governing themselves by Moderate Councils, contrary to all the Expectations, Hopes, or Fears, as above, offer'd nothing to the Prejudice of the *Dissenters*, abridg'd none of their Liberties, nor encourag'd any of the Heats without Doors, which would have
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push'd at the *Dissenters*; and the Session pass'd over, with a Calmness, as exceedingly Mortifying to the Enemies of Peace, as perhaps Surprizing to those who had been under Apprehensions of other Usage, as above.

By this happy Conduct, the *Dissenters* began to take Courage, Re-built their Demolish'd Meeting-Houses, and promis'd to themselves, that as Her Majesty had pass'd Her Royal Word, to preserve *Inviolable* their Privileges and Religious Liberty, they should enjoy the same, notwithstanding the former Fears, without any farther Interruption.

When on a suddain, from a Quarter whence they expected nothing of that kind, and from Hands, which they well hop'd would, as they formerly had been, held up in their Favour, the Storm seems to be Risen, by what ever Influence, and with what ever Design rais'd, is not for us to Enquire yet, but we shall adjourn it with the Words of the Apostle, *We have many Things to say, but you cannot bear them now.*

We are now come to that unhappy Time, That Crisis, when we see the *Dissenters* given up by their Beloved Patriots, Attack'd by those, who they justly plac'd their Confidence in, as the People from whom they expected Protection; and as a
nother

nother Author writes, sacrific'd to the Party-Interest of those, who pretended formerly to espouse them.

This, we say, with Respect to those People, who to Congratulate the New Converts that come over to a Party, are pleas'd to see themselves ruin'd, and the Liberties of their Posterity taken away, in Matters both Civil and Consciencious, in order to form a Secular Interest, and support their Prospects relating to Power, Management, and Administration : We are speaking now of People without Doors, for of the Parliament and Proceedings within Doors, we may not now discourse.

But above all, it seems Astonishing to Unbias'd Judgments, to find even the *Disseminators* themselves less Alarm'd at their approaching Bondage, than they us'd to be ; willing to please themselves with Hopes, that the Hands that this comes from, cannot be suppos'd to hurt them ; willing to amuse themselves with the Rumour, that the Bill now depending, is differing from the former, and less severe ; that it is qualified with some Circumstances which makes them amends ; that it includes a farther Security to the *Tolleration*, and the like.

Alas poor People ! When are ye to open your Eyes ? When will Heaven be pleas'd to restore you to your Understanding ?

What

What are you doing? If the present Bill is Qualified with some Clauses for your better liking it; if the bitter Pill is cover'd with a thin Leaf of glittering Metal; if there are not all the severe Things which you were formerly Attack'd with in this; Do you derive Comfort from this? Or ought you not the rather to see the certainty of what is to come, and that your Bondage is made sure to you, by the Earnest-Peny given you in the Beginning?

The present Parliament are, perhaps, dispos'd to gentle Methods, and backward to bring upon you the Weight you were formerly Threatned with, and you are pleas'd with the Negative of your Miseries, and Thankful that it is no worse.

But have you look'd at the Formidable Power of your Enemies without Doors? Have you Enquir'd into their New Measures? How having, as before, miscarried in their Attempts on you, by the Rash pushing all at once upon the whole of your Destruction, they now see their Mistake, and are acting wisely with you; *Go to, let us deal wisely with them*, was the Ancient Method of God's Enemies; and what is this Wisdom, but a gradual Encroachment upon you; and gaining by little and little, what they would find less likely to prevail in, if offer'd at once?

Fatal is their Policy, to wheedle you in! they take hold of your Party Animosities, and send over their *Hushai's* to Counterfeit a Revolt to you, and to bring in your Easie and Impolitick Leaders, into Measures with them, at your Cost; forming a Party to carry on Temporal Interest, at the Expence of your Religious Liberties; and thus you are drawn in by the Spies and Cheats of a Party, to be Agents in your own Destruction.

Poor unhappy blinded People! Supinely sitting down pleas'd with the Ruin of your Liberty, because it comes from Hands that you think would not hurt you! Perhaps those People whom you Rely so steadily upon, are your Friends, and would not willingly injure you, but they are not *Dissenters*, their Opinion is not with you, so it can be no Point of Conscience to them; perhaps they do not see so far into the fatal Consequences of your Oppressions, as you may soon have Cause to do; and are willing to give up a few Points, which they may not be sensible are fatal to your Interest; and as this may form a greater Interest for them another Way, they think this the lesser Mischief.

But is this suitable to the Sincerity of those Pretences these Men have always made, of a Disinterested regard to the Concerns of the *Dissenters*?

Dissenters? Is this according to the Stipulations of the Memorial to the P. of O...? Or is not this opening a Door, at which the apparent Ruin of the *Tolleration* must infallibly enter? It is our Duty to suppose, that the *Parliament* has no such View, has no Prospect or Intention, but to the better Establishing the Interest of the Church, and are not desirous of Invading the *Tolleration*, or taking away the Liberties of the *Dissenters*, or lessening their Native Rights: But is not the restless pursuit of the Ruin of the *Dissenters* at the bottom of their Conduct, who prompt these Things without Doors? And why do they content themselves with this part of their Design at this time? But perhaps because they foresaw they could obtain no more, and because they are willing to get up every Step they can, towards that intire Dominion over Conscience, which they hope to arrive to.

It cannot be construed a Reflection upon the Parliament, without manifest Injustice, to say, that others may have Abhor'd Destructive Prospects, in Contriving what these may have no View but the general Good in their Enacting; for the Wholest Laws have been perverted to the most wicked Purposes; as Establishments of Civil Right to Oppression; Corporation-Privileges to Monopoly; Royal Prerogative

to Tyranny, and Church Settlements to Persecution; and therefore while we charge the Party who aim at the Ruin of the Toleration, to be at the Bottom of every Attack against the *Dissenters*; we no more Re-proach the Proceedings of the Parliament; than when we clear the Parliament of any Evil in such Proceedings, we may be said to acquit the Contrivers and Party, who promote on all Occasions the Ruin of the *Dissenters* Liberty.

That the present Bill depending in the House, may be with fewer Restrictions than the last; That there may be some Clauses in Favour of the Toleration, we cannot say but all this may be true, and the Moderation and Justice of the Houses, are so far your Safety; but are there not Clauses in the same Law, which lessen the Liberties which the Act of Toleration either Granted you, or which were your Right in Consequence of the Act of Toleration, or which are the Native Rights of *English-Men*? Are there no Clauses which break in upon that Liberty of Conscience, which we have so long insisted upon as a Right which no Humane Power ought to Invade? Are there no Branches of Persecution in it? Are there no Powers given to your Enemies to Insult and Oppress your Consciences? Are there no poor Innocent Men, who must forego
their

their Employments, and starve their Families, or act against Conscience to feed them? Are there no innocent People who must be driven from the *Dissenters* to the *Church* meerly for Subsistence? Or which is still worse, are there no Conscientious *Dissenters* who must now perish and starve, because they cannot totally Conform, being obliged to quit their Employments, because they cannot in meer Conscience comply? If none of these Things are in the Bill it is well: but if there are, Let the *Dissenters* flatter themselves as much they will, that those on whose Favour and Judgment they so much depend, acquiesce in the Bill: Let them please themselves as much as they will in the Negatives of the Bill, That this or that which was severe in the late Bill, was not in this; they will find, let this be as mild as it will, it is yet so much the nearer to the Persecution which the Party designs; 'tis yet a Step forwarder to the approaching Evil that waits behind; the slower the Poison, the surer the Operation; the lingring Consumption is most certain to kill, and the **Toleration** which is the Aim of the Party, is so much the nearer to its fatal Period.

Nor

Nor is the Slumber of the *Dissenters*, and the Lethargy that is upon them as to this Matter, the least of their Danger, when they are so divided in Interests, heated with Animosities, and engaged in Parties, that too many among them are willing to give up any thing, and fall in with any Body, so they can but strengthen the Party Interest they pursue : This is a fore-boding Signal of the Ruin of their Interest, we speak not meerly with respect to the present Heats that rage among us, but for several Years past, this has been the prevailing Temper.

And how else could they now rejoyce in, and propose Things to themselves from the seeming Conversion or Revolt, or what you will call it, of a Person known thro' many Years of Publick Conduct, to bear a profess'd Aversion to the **Revolution**, to the Person of the King, to the whole Body, Being, and very Name of a *Dissenter* ? Is it for this Man and his very few Dependents, that we are so willing to Sacrifice the Liberties of Two Millions of Her Majesty's Subjects ? Is it to gain a Man who no Side ever thought capable of Business, whose Interest never put an Ounce in the Scale of Parties, but who has been the Derision of all Sides, and the Contempt even of his own

own House? Is it for this Man's Favour that a whole Party should deviate from their Ancient Steadiness, and give up the Rights and Privileges of their Countrymen?

We look upon an Attempt of this Nature, to be a Plot upon the **Whigs** in general, and their Interest as a Party, as well as upon the *Dissenters*; and this Plot is to divide them, and no doubt but it will have the desir'd Effect: For will the *Dissenters* ever trust a **Low Church Whig** again, when they find that these have turned upon them in such a manner as this, and flattering the other Party, put their Hands to such a Work as this, smiling to the **Tories**, with *JEHU, Come, see our Zeal for the Church!*

Could there ever be a more effectual Step to divide the Interest of the Whigs? Can one Party ever betray another but it lessens their Confidence one in another for ever after? Will a *Dissenter* ever repose his Safety again in the Breast of a *Church Whig*? Or will a *Church Whig* ever believe a *Dissenter* can trust him with his Liberty after this? And do not the Enemy percieve it?

Were there no Man of *Moderation* left among the whole Body to have recourse to, to save Us? And when did this happen? Had

it

it been when a Majority of *High Flying* Interest had Govern'd in the it might have been expected; but when we boasted of the contrary to an Extream, to have this Storm arise from that Quarter! O *Hominem!* O *Mores!*

Why should any Man wonder, That a *Nemine Contradicente* is added to the Accounts we have, of the Progress of the Affair we are upon? How should it be expected that any one should contradict what those alone, who it was always expected should oppose it, had consented to do, nay and as we are told, were the Originals, *I had almost said worse*, in the Famous Introduction of it into the

It might be expected here, that somewhat should be said to the Matter, of the present Bill depending: But there may be more time for that, and a Time more proper.

It may suffice at present, to speak a little to the General Design of a *Bill*, or *Act of Parliament*, against *The Occasional Conformity of Dissenters*, whether it respects this Bill or no, and a little of that *Occasional Conformity* it self, as they relate to what has been formerly Transacted in both Houses of Parliament upon that Head.

We

We have not the least View in this to plead for the Occasional Conformity of the Dissenters, as it relates to a meer Qualification, a Practice which it is manifest few of the Dissenters defend, which they are very much come off from, and which has done much more Prejudice to the Dissenters themselves, than to the Church. But it seems absolutely necessary in common Justice, to distinguish here between a voluntary ill Practice of a few, and a Law to divest the Subject either of his Civil or Religious Right.

We find many People, who by their constant Practice, tho' dissenting in Worship, and in many things relating to Discipline, Church-Government and Ceremony, have yet held it as a Point of Conscience, to maintain a Communion of Charity with the Church; others, tho' they do not choose to Communicate with the Church, yet in such Cases where the Law requires it, think themselves bound in Conscience, *as they are to shew Obedience to the Laws*, to comply with that Occasionally, which statedly, they cannot do; these we call *Conscientious Conformers*.

If these things are meerly Matter of Principle, then oppressing these Men must be the highest of *Persecution*, which *Persecution* was censur'd in the Preamble to the first Occasional Bill, to be *contrary to the Principle of the Christian Religion, and the Doctrine*

of the Church of England: And it is to be noted here, as well worth our Reflection, that both the first and second *Occasional Bills* were rejected, because they were look'd upon to be a Degree of *Persecution*.

We cannot but think 'tis always reasonable to distinguish, between preventing an evil Practice, and taking away a Civil Right, and that this is the Case here, no Body will dispute.

The Dissenters have injury enough, in that they are by the Letter of the Law, *contrary to the Intent and Meaning of the whole Legislature at the time of its making*, excluded from the common Privileges in Society with their Fellow-Subjects, *viz.* of serving the Publick, and receiving the Reward of their Prince, for the Expressions of their Zeal and Loyalty in the publick Service; except upon the unhappy Condition of doing that (which as Dissenters) they may be not supposed capable to do.

But to lay so severe an Injunction, That if ever they touch any publick Employ, they shall never go to hear a Sermon again, or to communicate again in a Meeting-House. This is Persecution with a witness, to compel to do any thing, which is against our Conscience to do, otherwise, tho' lawful in itself, is *Persecution*; to restrain from doing what is in it self lawful, and we may think

to be Duty to do, *is Persecution* ; and all the Punishment inflicted in these Cases, *is Persecution* in the Abstract.

It has been so often argu'd, that this is no Service to the Church, or to the High Party, that this Argument seems perfectly useless to be repeated ; but we cannot but take notice, that all the Acts hitherto propos'd, have not seem'd to have an Eye to the Church, but to the Civil Preferments ; not to bring the Dissenters over to the Church, but to keep them out of the Offices of Profit. There lies the true Aim in all this matter ; and this has been so visible in all the former Practice, that it needs little Explanation.

Had the Design been purely the bringing the Dissenters over to the Church, they would let it alone where it is, since nothing is more certain than this, that the Occasional Conformity of Dissenters has done more towards bringing all their Posterity into the Church, than all the Coercive Laws, Penal Statutes, or other Violence in the World could ever do ; and it is most remarkable, that generally speaking, where-ever the Parents have been Occasional Conformists, the Children have been total Conformist. So that this Liberty taken by the Dissenters, has been the Ruin of their Strength, the breaking of the principal Families of their Party, and the

indifferency of one Age has terminated the dissenting of the next.

This the High Church Men are not ignorant of, and it is mention'd for this Reason, *viz.* To prove, that were the true Interest of the Church regarded in this Case, or at least were that true Interest the End and Design in these things, they would entirely let the Dissenters alone. But the Design in these things is so far from that, is so remote from a Religious View, that it all centers in making Parties, keeping Posts of Profit and Advantage, and if possible, keeping the Dissenters out of them ; and which is yet worse, the Aim is at a dividing the Interest of the Whiggs, which being link'd to that of the Dissenters, has been too formidable for them to deal with ; but if the Low Church Men can be brought to give up the Dissenters——What then ! Why they shall have the Honour——of what ? Of being devour'd last, and that is all they can promise themselves.

And will the Low Church Men give up the Dissenters ? Will they make a Sacrifice of the Consciences of their Brethren, to gain a small Addition to their Party Interest ? What can be said to them ? We crave leave to remind them of two or three things.

1. How long do ye think the New Interest you are making will last, upon so
ill

ill a Foundation built? How far can you go along with the New Converts you are bringing over, either they must turn Whigs, or you must turn High Flyers? The first can never be but by Project, and purpose to trick and deceive you; and the last can never be but by unaccountable and most judicial Blindness; and if these cannot be, then you cannot go far together.

2. When they and you part, and they go back to their own Party, you having in the highest manner provok'd the Dissenters, are you able to stand the Ground against Popery and High Flying mad Men by your selves?
3. Remember the time when you were last try'd, and consider that two things will suit your present Case. (1.) That when you were try'd with Popery and Slavery, the one from a Popish Prince, the other from *French* Maxims of Government, what was your Case? Were you able to stand your Ground alone? were you not sensible of the impossibility of it? And (2.) when you were sensible of the contrary, and made solemn Invitations to the Dissenters to stand by you, and join with you, did the Dissenters abandon you? Did they make their Court to King *James* at your Expence,

pence, as it is evident they might have done, and were courted by the King to do? In short, did they serve you then, as they are served by you? No; they resisted all the Caresses of Popery and and Passive-Obedience, Tories, and chose Affliction and Hazard with that very Church of *England*, that now are for denying them the least publick Advantage, from that Government they have spent their Blood and their Money to support?

Are these the Men you will now Sacrifice to the private Views you have of a Party-Strength? Are these the Returns to the Dissenters, for the putting themselves into your Hands? Is this the Temper promised them at the Revolution? Is this the Justice to their adhering so vehemently to the personal Interest, in the late Changes of those that are now making a Market of them? *Honest Coleman!* Thou hast lost the most effectual and undisputed Axiom of Political Philosophy that ever was deliver'd at the Gallows; **No Trust in Man!** The Scriptures concur in it: *Rich Men are Vanity, and Great Men are a Lye. Put not your Trust in Princes.*

Turn

Turn we our Eyes up to Heaven, from whence cometh Help ; and as *Zachariah* the Son of *Jehoiadab* said, when the Rabble stoned him, after all the great Things his Father had done for them ; *The Lord look upon it, and require it.*

Nor can the Spirit of common Discerning forbear to say, without Respect or Claim to Prophecies, This cannot end but in the sinking of that very Party, who by this Treatment of an innocent People, seek to Establish their Interest even with the very Men they always abhor'd. They will sink under the Weight of the Party they Caress, and this *Egyptian* shall be to them as a Staff, which whoever leaneth thereon, it shall pierce thro' their Hand, and the Deliverance of the Dissenters shall come some other way.

But we are told here several Things, to buoy us up under the Weight of what we see coming upon us ; such as these.

1. The Bill now depending in Parliament, tho' it may restrain the Occasional Conformity of Dissenters, as to Places, yet it gives you more than the Equivalent in many Things ; it confirms the Toleration, it restores the Act of Exemption to the Name of the Toleration, which it had lost ; it checks the Jacobite bites in *Scotland*, and it is not extended

in many Things, which were included in the former Act.

2. It was brought in from a Prospect of meer Kindness to the Dissenters, to prevent the Design of another Party, who had projected one tenfold worse, and which had been perfectly ruinous to the Dissenters Interest, and had in effect turn'd the Toleration out of Doors. And both these evidence that the Dissenters are not given up, or betray'd, or sacrific'd as above.

We answer briefly to this, that, *as before*, We are not debating what Favour the Two Houses of Parliament may grant in the Bill now depending. It is not for us to say here we are speaking *of* or *to* that Bill, or to the Houses of Parliament; but we are speaking to those People, whom we call *Whigs without Doors*, who are concern'd in, or agree to bringing any Bill in, or putting forward any Law, to restrain the Consciences of Innocent Men, and take from them at the severe Penalty of the loss of their Employments, the Liberty of serving God, according to their Consciences: If the Parliament have sweetened this bitter Potion with any Negatives; with any Favours, We are for being thankful for all Favours, but We are not to think ourselves oblig'd at all to any of those People,
if

if any such are, who having it in their Power to prevent it, have put us into the Condition to seek or be glad of such Favours.

And let those Favours be what they will, if the Clause excluding all those from the Natural Privilege of *Loyal Subjects*, and from the Favours of their Sovereign, who cannot, *how Consciencious soever their Scruples are*, Conform to the *Church*: We may without Offence say, we should not be at all the less thankful to be without the said Favours, having but at the same time the Liberty to be without the Grievance.

As to what is called *Confirming our Toleration*, if we think it sufficiently Confirm'd before, and in a most Sacred Manner Establish'd, besides the Act of Parliament, in the Sanction of Her Majesty's Solemn Promise from the Throne, of preserving it **Inviolable** : We hope it will not be ill taken, if we say, We do not see how it can be better Confirm'd, tho' every Session of Parliament should pass a New Act in its Favour : Nor is our Confidence less in Her Majesty's Sacred Promise, than in all the Acts to Confirm our **Toleration**, that are or can be pass'd ; since one Parliament may Repeal what ever Acts another has made, *and even their own too* : But Her Majesty's Veracity is a Royal Security which we have so much Dependance upon, as

we cannot prevail upon our selves to say,
We desire any further Confirmation of it.

That the Parliament in their printed
Votes have thrown Dirt in the Face of
that condemn'd Impostor S....., and
restor'd the Act for the Liberty of *Dissen-*
ters, to the true Title and Denomination
of it, *viz.* a *Toleration*, *vide* the *Votes*,
Die Lunæ Decemb. 18. 1711. It is a satisfy-
ing Piece of Justice done that Honourable
House, and what we are bound to acknow-
ledge, is like the Righteous Proceedings of
so August an Assembly, and we should
have been larger in owning the Favour,
did it not come accompany'd with some-
thing in the Cover of it, which we can by
no means, without the utmost Hypocrisy
be thankful for, *viz.* *An Act to restrain*
the Consciences of Men, in the Affair of pos-
sessing Offices, without renouncing the worship-
ping God in their own way, and according to the
Dictates of their Consciences. For this we
can no more be thankful, than to a Judge
who pronounces Sentence of Death against
us for Crimes we think our selves not guilty
of.

That we had as *Dissenters* a Legal *Tole-*
ration before, by Act of Parliament, is cer-
tain, That the Act Intituled, *An Act to Ex-*
empt Her Majesty's Protestant Subjects, &c.
is a *Toleration*, is out of all question true,
and

and to prove it, The Title to this Act now passing is my Authority, being the Words of the Parliament, Lords and Commons, in whose Name, and by whose very Mouths *S.....* is thus pronounc'd an Impostor and a Deceiver.

We might Address our selves now to speak to the Act it self, and examine Two Things in it, and which shall be done with Brevity and Modesty.

1. Will this Act answer the End which is pretended in the Title, *viz. To secure the Church of England?*
2. Will it answer the particular View of those who acquiesce in it, in hopes of obtaining by it their Party-Ends, against the Measures taken for a Peace?
3. Will this Act answer the Two other Ends, confirm the *Toleration*, and preserve the *Succession*?

1. Will it answer the End which is pretended in the Title, *viz. To secure the Church of England*; To this I give the Opinion of all those Gentlemen, whose Speeches are upon Record, against the first and second **Occasional-Bill**, where it seems manifest, at least, That it was all their Opinion, that this Law would bring no real Addition to the *Church*, only serve to keep the Body of

Dissenters more united : And if we might add in this Case, that *Union* may in time be found the only Case, in which the *Dissenters* can be formidable to the *Church* : The divided Condition of the *Dissenters*, their vain Trusts in the *Great Men* who they thought were their *Protectors*, their frequent Access to Favours and Fortunes ; these have all along been the Foundation of their Disasters ; their Dependance upon *Great Men* elevated them, made them secure, divided them, made them despise Caution and Enemies, and made them self-interested, narrow, and reserv'd ; *in short*, it bury'd what they call a Publick Spirit among them ; this lessen'd them in their Real Strength to that Degree, that instead of making them Formidable, it made them Despicable ; so that indeed the Liberty and Occasional Conformity of *Dissenters*, has been their Ruin, has been the Weakning their Strength, Lessening their Numbers, and Destroying their Interest ; and in all these have been, *if the Prosperity of the Dissenters is the Churches Danger*, a Safety to the Church. Now will this Restraint answer the Churches End, as it is propos'd ? It is impossible ; neither is it Calculated for that End, since as is before Noted, the Design is not to bring the *Dissenters* over to the Church, but to keep them out of Places : But if
alarm'd

alarm'd by this Treatment, the Dissenters should more firmly Unite, act in Concert, recover the Reputation of their Integrity and Sincerity, as if they are wise they may, they will add weight to their Interest, and the End of their mighty Struggle will be quite Defeated.

2. Will it answer the End of those, who by it push at breaking the Measures of the Court, as to Peace or War ?

Not in the least. The Interest they had this way is entirely divided by it ; Mutual Confidence is Destroy'd, *Irretrievably Destroy'd*, and can never be Restor'd. When Men Trust and Confide in one another, and then Decieve one another, they *seldom*, but in Parties and Sets of Men *Never* Trust again ; they may join Out-sides, tho' that will be Difficult, but In-sides Never : Now if the Concert is broken, which *when whole* could not withstand the Measures above, how should they do it when Divided ? No Strength encreases by being separated ; *Vis Unita Fortior*, is an Old and True Maxim, to say *Vis separata Fortior*, would be a gross Absurdity ; Can any one be so weak to think that the Interest of the Whigs and Dissenters, which is miserably Torn and Dismembred by this Mystery of Politicks, can be able to do that now which they could not do before ? Where are the Legions
added

added to their Strength by this New Step ? Where is the Equivalent they Recieve ? *Ridiculus Mus !* A poor empty unaccompany'd *Hero*, Whose Interest has not been able to Draw his own Brethren, the Sons of his Mother, into his Measures. Nay, whose Measures Unconcerted and Undetermin'd, have hardly amounted to a Clear Proposal—Where are the Preliminaries of this mighty Treaty ? Truly the Whigs have done as the King of *France* was to do, first evacuate the Towns, and then let the Confederates make their Demands ; so they have first evacuated their Friends, surrendered the Faith they had Pledg'd to the Dissenters, and now the Tories may make their Demands, and if it be to give up the Toleration next, we do not see how these can deny them ; so that in short, the End is as Uncertain as it was before.

3. *Will this Act Confirm the Toleration ?* Because the House says it *shall*, we will not say it *shall not* ; but God forbid we should say it *will*, while we see not the least room for any thing of that Kind : This Act and a Hundred more of this Nature, being all attended with this Circumstance, That they may be Repeal'd by the Breath of the House, who gives them Life. *As to the Succession being Secured*, by excluding a few *Jacobites* out of the Faculty at *Edinburgh*, where they

are

are capable of doing little Mischief, unless they were likewise excluded out of Commissions of the Peace in *Scotland*, where their Power is capable of doing things Fatal to the Succession, as may be proved by innumerable Instances, We cannot have so much value for that Clause as others have. As to *Confirming the Toleration*, We will not say that this Act is a direct Breach of the *Toleration*, and a most Open Invasion of the Liberties Granted to the Dissenters by the Toleration; But we must profess our selves utterly Ignorant of any Discovery to our present Understanding, as to any Clause, Matter, or Thing in it, whereby the said Toleration is at all Confirm'd as abovesaid; which Ignorance, we hope, may be Humbly acknowledg'd, without Offence.

We conclude this with One Only View, being the last Resort the Dissenters have, and the Alone Help, which Humane Power can offer to interpose in this Affair, and *This is in Her Majesties Royal Goodness and Compassion.*

And the Authors of this small Tract, beg leave, in the Humblest manner, with all possible Respect, with the utmost sense of Duty, in the Name of Her Majesties Loyal, but Distressed, Protestant Subjects, the Dissenters; to whom Her Majesty has so often promis'd Her Protection; and in whose Zeal
for

for Her Service, Her Majesty has been Graciously pleas'd to express great Satisfaction;
To represent,

That Her Majesty has given Her Royal and Sacred Promise to Them on several Occasions, to Preserve their Toleration **Inviolable.**

Submitting the rest to Her Majesty's Consideration.

acknowledg'd, without Offence.
We conclude this with One Only View, being the last before the Dissenters have, and the Alone, which Human Power can offer to interpose in this Affair, and this is in Her Majesty's Goodness and Com-

And the Xth of this small Tract, beg leave in the printed manner, with all possible Respect, with the utmost sense of Duty, in the Name of Her Majesty's Loyal, but Dissent'd, Protestant Subjects, the Dis- tincts; to whom Her Majesty has so often promis'd Her Protection; and in whole Zeal for

